Pocahontas 6

West Virginia Writers' Project

OFFICE LETTER

To Bruce Crawford Office	Date
From Juanita S. Dilley Office	Referring to
Subject Brethern churches	File

Separate sheet for each subject. Omit all formalities. For office letters only.

Use in connection with this material, the histories of the following churches previously sent in: Central Union, Union Chapel called Beverage church found under the churches at Poage Lane. Kerr Memorial, Boyer; New hope between Frost and Dunmore.

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RESEARCH IDENTIFICATION REPORT

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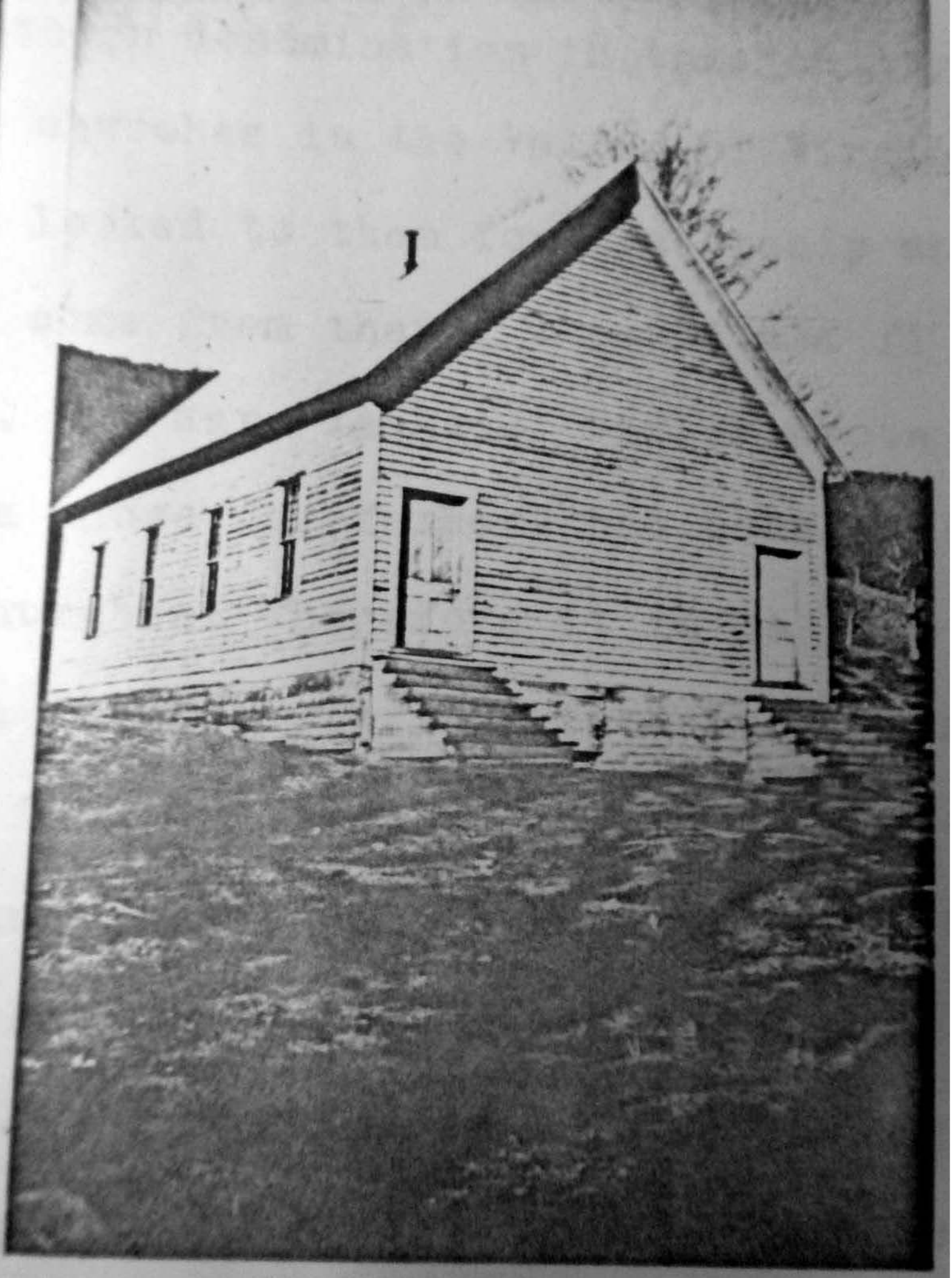
Mrs. Adam O. Hevener, Mrs. Martha Cassell, Rev. Garber, Rev. Pugh. Pocahontas Times, West Virginia Review, Deed Book 60 page 476, and from material gotten for me from preachers and records in Virginia, by Rev. Garber of Durbin.



February 10, 1941

BRETHERN CHURCH IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

The Brethern denomination in this county has always been under the churches in the Valley of Virginia, or at least we have always looked to them for leadership and most of our preachers have come from there. I could ~~not~~ fi nd no records in this county, but Rev. Isaac J. Garber wrote to some older men in Virginia whose forefathers had been early ministers in the mountain churches. Therefore it is to them that I am indebted for much of the early history of these churches.

Quoting from a letter from A. S. Thomas, "There are no records to my knowledge, only I know that the Mission work was established in Pocahontas at an early date. I know that in 1858 my father Jacob Thomas was on a preaching tour into the county (horse back). My Uncle Daniel Thomas became ill and Martin Ruff was sent after him, but he had died and was buried before father reached home. I am sure that before the Civil War, there was preaching in that county for I have heard Bro. George Wine tell about an old church one half mile this side of Allegheney Chapel. The first trip I made was before the Chapel was built. We preached just below the road from the chapel. The work had been in progress some years before for there were two preachers when I first went, Bro. W. Wilmoth and Bro. John Varner. I made this trip about 50 years ago."

The church he here referrs to is the old log church on Top Allegheney mountain near the Virginia line. The deed

for this old church was given on July 31, 1858 by Jacob Yeager and Sarah his wife, and John Yeager and Margaret his wife, parties of the first part, to John Yeager, Jonas Ruffenberger, Able Wilfong, Andrew Burner, Washington Arbogast, Andrew Wooddell and Frank Gumm, trustees. Camp Baldwin was located on this site during the Civil War and the old church was used as a hospital and a barracks.

This church is believed to be the first preaching place of the Brethern, or Dunkards as they were usually called, in this county. From there it spread to Union Chapel, called Beverage Church, on Clover Creek.

"The first statistics of the Brethern church were compiled about 1880. At that time they show the following places where there was regular preaching in West Virginia. Valley Head in Randolph county, Top Allegheney in Pocahontas county, Clover Creek in Pocahontas county, Dry Run, Mt. Freedom, South Branch, South Fork and Pendleton all in Pendleton county. The following Brethern had been elected to the ministry in these communities and were helping carry on the work, J. Spencer, John Varner, and W. Wilmoth of Top Allegheney, B. Wilfong of Edray and Levi Beverage of Clover Creek."(Wilfongs' address was Edray but he lived only a few miles from Beverage church on Clover Creek). " Jacob Thomas and Martin Miller, Sr. were early ministers in Pocahontas county, and a little later came Hiram Miller and Joe Cline." Joe Beverage, a brother to Levi, often came here to visit his brothers and would assist in a revival or hold services on Sunday. Jacob Garber was also an early preacher in this county.

In 1903, a new church called Allegheney Chapel was built

on Top Allegheney, the deed was given by Wm. B. Freeman and Mary A. Freeman his wife, parties of the first part, to W. Lee. Wilmoth and Marvin Wilfong, two of a board of five trustees; representing the Dunkard church, Martin J. Colaw and P. A. Tracy(representing the M. E. Church) and Wm. B. Freeman, "to be held in trust by them and their sucessors as a public place of worship for the two denominations above mentioned: The M. E: Church to use it on the first and third Sundays, and the Dunkards Church to use it on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. A certain tract of lamd on the Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike near where the Buffalo Mountain road intersects the Pike, containing one acre."

From a clipping on the death of Mrs. Wilmoth in Nov: " Mrs. Sabina Wilmoth labored earnestly beside her husband to build a better home and community life. Their efforts were centered especially on the Top Allegheney church, of which she was a life long member. Their home became the temporary home for summer workers and visiting ministers, and is remembered by all for the hospitality and the interest in music that was prevelent there." She was the wife of W. Lee Wilmoth, who is the same W. Wilmoth referred to previously.

"Allegheney Chapel is said to be the highest church in West Virginia. It stands at an elevation of 3000 feet. It must be one of the three or four highest churches in all the Appalachians. This church is built on a battle field. The Battle of Top Allegheney was fought here, part of it on the very ground on which the church stands. Here the Federal forces attacked and were driven back by the Confederates who had fortified the mountain just east of the present site of the church. Deep/trenc

remain today a few hundred feet from the church. Near them are fifteen or twehty heaps of stones that were once the chimneys of log cabins in which the Confederates wintered. These cabins stood for some years after the Civil War.

The Allegheney Chapel is used by two denominations. The German Baptist Brethern hold services in it one Sunday and the Methodists the next. The mimbership includes the residents of two states Virginia and West Virginia. Near this unusually situated church is some of the most beautiful scenery in all West Wirginia." From-West Virginia Review, by Charles Carpenter

HEVENER BRETHERN CHURCH

This church on Back Allegheney Mountain, two miles from Hosterman was the first, and is the only church in the county built by the Brethern themselves and deeded to them alone. The members of this church had their first services at the home of Adam and Rebecaa Hevener. Adam Hevener, Sr. and his brothers Robert, Samuel and John had come from Rockingham county Virginia, and settled on Back Mountain some time in the later part of the 1800's. They were Brethern when they came. In 1904, they built a church on land given by Samuel Hevener, Widower, to James K. Hoover, Robert J. Hevener and John J. Hevener, trustees of the German Baptist Brethern near Hosterman- for the use of the German Baptist Brethern of Hevener Church.

The church was completed and dedicated on June 12, 1904. The dedicatory sermon was preached by Hiram G. Miller of Bridgewater, Virginia. At the time the church was built, there were only a few families of Brethern on the mountain. These were the families of the above named Heveners, James K. Hoover,

and Benjamin Collins, a local preacher, but later they had a membership of around 60.

After the church was built, John W. Hevener became the preacher and remained so until he moved to Pennsylvania fifteen years ago. Rev. E. F. Sherfy then came on the work and preached not only at Hevener church but at Boyer, Top Allegheney, and New Hope. After him came Isaac J. Garber, who has been on the circuit for seven years, and is the eighth generation in a family of Brethern preachers. He is to be sent to a church in Virginia the first of March, and some one else will take his place here. Rev. J. W. Pugh was licened by the Brethern to preach 20 years ago and since that time has been very active in carrying on the work in this county.

Each year preachers from the Valley of Virginia come to Hevener church and hold revivals. Twenty three years ago a preacher by the name of Ernest Coughman held a revival and baptised 20 in one day.

Each summer, too, they send one of their women workers here to conduct a Bible School in this church.

The present members are: S. S. Davidson and family, Adam O. Hevener, Jr. and family, Mrs. Herman Gratehouse, Eva Gratehouse, John Gratehouse and family, James M. Colaw and family, A. E. Sheets and family, Parker Gragg and family, Mrs. Sallie Wright, Mrs. Velma Dutton of Durbin comes to this church for communion.

Brethern church

In 1918, the old school house at Hosterman was sold by the Board of Education to E. M. and C. M. Ratliff who in turn deeded it to D. H. Wright, trustee, and it was for a time used as a Progressive Dunkard church. It was then sold and moved to the upper end of the county in 1922 and the deed was given by Charles B. Cromer and Mary E. Cromer his wife, to W. H. Collins, D. H. Wright, and J. R. Cromer, trustees. It was used only a few years, when it was destroyed by fire.

At the present time there are two Brethern preachers in this county. Rev. Isaac J. Garber and Rev. J. W. Pugh.

At Hevener church there are 58 members. At Kerr Memorial church Boyer they have their largest membership with 92 members, from Boyer and surrounding communities, some of them as far south as Glade Hill. At New Hope church between Frost and Dunmore there is a membership of 16. At Allegheney Chapel on Top Allegheney there are only 11 members, only 4 of whom are land owners, the others are just ready to move from the mountain at any time, Because of this small class and since the Methodists have not used the church for several years, it has gone down until the church has been abandoned altogether, and plans are to have it torn down in the spring and the material divided equally between the two denominations. The Methodists plan to use their part of the lumber to build class rooms to the Arbovale church. The Brethern are not sure yet just what they will use their part of it for, perhaps to build a church to accommodate some of the members that now belong to the Boyer church. Rev. Garber has all of the above named appointments.

Rev. Pugh preaches at Woods Poage Chapel at Poage Lane. He has a membership of 20 at this church. There has been a class in this community since 1873 when Union Chapel, known as Beverage church was built, and no one knows how long before. He also preaches on Stony Creek. At first they used old Hamline Chapel, but they now use the Presbyterian church a t that place. There are 14 members on Stony Creek with Mrs Ed. Wooddell and her daughter Ada as two of the main workers. At Central Union there are 10 members with Levi Ervine and Ressie Wilfong as two of the main ones. Luster Wooddell and Ressie Wilfong are the Deacons.

Records show that as the Brethern moved into the county, that they made requests for preachers to be sent and a committee of S. A. Shaver, John A. Cline and F. S. Sanger were appointed to receive calls and to see that they were filled by a minister. Local churches were, however, responsible for the mission work in the mountain churches in this District until in 1920 when a District Board was appointed to look after the mountain churches An effort is being made to make them self reliant instead of looking to the churches in Virginia for so much help.